## THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

Copyright, 1920. Fred A. Knopf. Copyright, 1920, by the Public Ledger Co.

SYNOPSIS

THIS STARTS THE STORY

Frank Spargo, a young London eecspaper man, returning home from his work late one night aces a couple of men peering into a corner of an alleyway. Investigation reveals a man dead, murdered, it seemed. In his pocket is found the name "Ronald Breton, Barrister, King's Bench Walk, Temple, London," Breton asarts he does not know the man. At his hotel the man had registered as "John Marbury." He received but one visitor, a tall well-dressed man with a gray beard. He paid for whisky and soda from a handful of sovereigns but hadn't a penny piece on him when found dead. A man sitting next to Marbury while lobbying in the House of Commons, tells of his escilement on the appearance of a tall man with a gray beard.

Stephen Aylmare, M. P. They left the House together. The hotel keeper shows Sparga a shining piece of stone—a diamond—found in his room, and the waiter festifies to having seen a number of these stones on Marbury's table while Aylmare was visiting him. Aylmore is visited and admits to having known the dead man a number of years back, and to his visit the night before. Aylmore's daughtef, Jesse, is engaged to marry Breton, who is the adopted son of a Mr. Elphick, also an attorney. Rathburg, of Scalland Yard, is working on the ease with Spargo. THIS STARTS THE STORY

of Scalland Yard, is working on the ease with Spargo.

Spargo receives a visit from A. P. Myerst, secretary to a sufe deposit company, who tells him that Marbury had sented a sufe from him and deposited a small leather box therein, remarking at the time. "That box is sofe naw. But it's been sufer. It's been buried—and deep down too—for many and many a year." "Did you ask him what he meant?" asked Spargo. "Oh, no, not at all," replies Myerst. "Then you missed one of the finest opportunities I ever heard of," said Spargo.

(AND HERE IT CONTINUES) sofe now. But it's been sufer. It's been buried—and deep down, too—for many and many a year. "Did you oak him what he meant?" asked Spargo. "Oh, no, not at all," replies Myerst. "Then you missed one of the finest opportunities I ever heard of." said Spargo.

[AND HERE IT CONTINUES]

HE PAUSED, as if it were not worth while to continue, and turned to Rathbury, who was regarding him with anusement.

[Look here, Rathbury." he said. "Just so," said Mr. Criedir. "Which makes me think that he was going to see Mr. Cardlestone when he was set upon, murdered and robbed." Spargo looked fixedly at the retired stamp-dealer.

Rathbury, who was regarding him with anusement.

"Look here, Rathbury." he said.
"Is it possible to get that box opened?"
"It'll have to be opened." answered Rathbury, rising. "It's got to be opened. "Spargo looked fixedly at the retired stamp-dealer.
"What, zoing to see an elderly gentleman in bis rooms in the Temple, to offer to seil him philatelic rarities at past midnight?" he said. "I think—not much!"
"All right." replied Mr. Criedir. "You think and argue on modern lines —which are, of course, highly superior. any rate we'll have it done tomorrow

"Can you arrange for me to be present "Can you arrange for me to be present when that comes off?" asked Spargo. "You can—certain? That's all right Rathbury. Now I'm off, and you'll ring me up or come round if you hear anything, and I'll do the same by you."

And without further word. Snargo went quickly away, and just as quickly returned to the Watchman office. There the assistant, who had been told off to wait moon his orders during this new

wait upon his orders during this new crusade, met him with a business card.

"This gentleman came in to see you about an how ago, Mr. Snargo." he said. "He thinks he can tell you some-thing about the Marbury affair, and he said that as he couldn't wait, perhaps really shore round to his place when you

said that as he couldn't wait, perhaps you'd stee round to his place when you came in."

Spargo took the card and read:

Mr. James Criedir,
Dealer in Philatelic Rarities,
2,021, Strand.

Spargo put the card in his waistcoat pecket and went out again, wondering why M. James Criedir could not, would not, or did not call himself a dealer in rare postage stamps, and so use plain English. He went up Fleet street and soon found the first plant for dealer in rare postage stamps, and so use plain English. He wout up Ficet street and soon found the Shop indicated use plain English. He went is street and soon found the shop indicated on the card, and his first glance at its exterior showed that whatever business might have been done by Mr. Criedir in the past at that establishment there was to be none done there in the future by him, for there was newly printed bills in the window announcing that the place was to let. And inside he found a short, portly, eldrily man who was superportly, eldrily man who was superinted bills intended the packing up and removal intended the packing up and removal.

Intended the packing up and removal when Marbury when Marbury when Marbury when Marbury when Marbury was to let.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Spargo," he said genially. "Take a seat, sir—I'm all in confusion here—giving up business, you see. Yes, I called on you. I think, having read the Watchman account of hings repeated over and over again:

"Six hours—six hours—six hours."

"Six hours—six hours."

"Next morning the Watchman came

think, having read the Watchman account of that Marbury affair, and having seen the murdered man's photograph in your columns, that I can give you a bit of information."

"Material?" asked Spurgo, tersely, Mr. Criedir cocked one of his bright eses at his visitor. He coughed dryly, "That's for you to decide—when you've heard it," he said. "I should say, considering everything, that it was material. Well, it's this—I kept open until yesterday—everything as usual, you know—stock in the window and so on—so that anybody who was passing would naturally have thought that the basiness was going on, though as a mathematical that it was material. Well, it's this—I kept open until yesterday—everything as usual, you know—stock in the window and so on—so that anybody who was passing would naturally have thought that the basiness was going on, though as a mathematical that it was material.

"Just so," agreed Spargo. "This information, now?"
"Well," said Mr. Ciedir "we'll"

Soop as I saw it. He was carrying a southwest, because he turned up at what sort of box?' said Spargo.

"What sort of box?' said Spargo.
"A queer, old-fashioned, much-worn leather box—a very miniature trunk, in fact," replied Mr. Criedir. "About a foot square: the sort of thir you.

Beacher Bestern leaving an hour away in

-at any rate there were a lot of legal-looking documents on the top, tied up with red tape. To show you how I notice things I saw that the papers were stained with age, and that the red tape was faded to a mere washed-out pink."

"Good—good!" murmured Spargo.
"Excellent! Proceed, sir."

"He put his band under the top-most papers and drew out an envelope," continued Mr. Criedir. "From the envelope he produced an exceedingly rare, exceedingly valuable set of Colonial stamps—the very first ever issued. 'I've just come from Australia,' he said. 'I promised a young friend of mine out there to sell these stamps for him in London, and as I was passing this way I caught sight of your shop. Will you buy 'em, and how much will you give for 'em?"

"Prompt." muttered Spargo.

"He seemed to me the sort of man who doesn't waste words," agreed Mr. Criedir. "Well, there was no doubt about the stamps, nor about their great value. But I had to explain to him that I was retiring from business that very day, and did not wish to enter into even a single deal, and that, therefore, I couldn't do anything. No matter, he says, 'I dare say there are lets of men in your line of tradeperhaps you can recommend me to a good firm?' 'I could recommend you to a dozen extra-good firms,' I answered. 'But I can do better for you, I'll give you the name and address of a private buyer who, I haven't the least doubt, will be very glad to buy that set from you and will give you a big price.' 'Write it down, he says, 'and thank you for your trouble.' So I gave him a bit of advice as to the price he ought to get, and I wrote the name and address of the man I referred to on the back of one of my cards.'

"Whose name and address?" asked Spargo.

"Mr. Nicholas Cardlestone, 2. Pileox Buildings, Middle Temple Laue." re-

Spargo, Mr. Nichidas Cardlestone, 2. Pileox

"You think and argue on modern lines—which are, of course, highly superior. But—haw do you account for my having given Marbury Mr. Cardlestone's uddress and for his having been found dead—murdered—at the foot of Cardlestone's stairs a few hours later?"
"I don't account for it," said Spargo. "I'm trying to."
Mr. Criedir made no comment on his. He looked his visitor up and down for a moment; gathered some idea of his capabilities and suddenly offered him a cigarette.

Spargo accepted it with a lacouic word of theales, and smoked haif-way through it before he spoke again.
"Yes." he said. "I'm trying to account, And I shall account. And I'm anch obliged to you, Mr. Criedir, for

count. And I shall account. And I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Criedir, for what you've told me. Now, then, may

of the last of his stock.

He turned a bright, inquiring eye on the journalist.

"Mr. Criedir?" said Spargo.

"The same, sir," answered the philatelist. "You are——?"

"Mr. Spargo, of the Watchman, You called on me."

Mr. Criedir opened the door of a tiny apartment at the rear of the very little shop and motioned his caller to enter, the followed him in and carefully closed the door.

"Class of his stock.

"I know they did," said Spargo. "I saw 'em at the mortuary. Um! Well—one more question. When Marbury left you, did he put, those stamps in his box again, as before?"

"No." replied Mr. Criedir. "He put them in his right-hand breast pocket, and he lecked up his old box, and went off swinging it in his left hand."

Spargo went away down Fleet street, seeing nobody. He muttering when he got into his room at the office. And what he

you know—stock in the window and so on—so that anybody who was passing would naturally have thought that the business was going on, though as a matter of fact. I'm retiring—retired," added Mr. Criedir with a laugh, "last light. Now—but won't you take down what I've got to tell you?"

"I am taking it down," answered Spargo, "Every word. In my head."

Mr. Criedir laughed and rubbed his hands.
"Oh!" be said. "Ah, well, in my young days journalists used to pull out perfunity. But you modern young men—""

"Just so," agreed Spargo was sanguine whough to expect that his staring headline would brigh him information the kept to himself. That a good many thousands of human beings must have set eyes on John Marbury between the hours which Spargo set forth in that headline was certain; the problem was hands.

"Oh!" be said. "Ah, well, in my young days journalists used to pull out perfunity. But you modern young men."

"Just so," agreed Spargo was sanguine enough to expect that his staring headline would brigh him information the thousands of human beings must have set eyes on John Marbury between the hours which Spargo set forth in that headline was certain; the problem was being a pair of many pairs of those eyes would remember him? Why should they report the problem was certain; the problem was have a pair of many pairs of those eyes would remember him? Walters and his wife had reason to remember him; Criedir had reason to remember him; So had William Webster. But between a quarter past three, when he between a quarter past three, when he left the London and Universal Safe information now?"

"Well," said Mr. Ciedir, "we'll be sat down by Webster's side in the man described as Marbury came into my shop. He "What time—exact time?" asked spargo.

"Two—to the very minute by St. asked beloth ear at his shop. At any rate. Spargo.

"Two—to the very minute by St. Clement Danes clock." answered Mr. Criseir. "I'd swear twenty affidavits on that point. He was precisely as thing—I tell you I knew his photo as soon as I saw it. He was carrying a southwest, because he turned up at southwest, because he turned up at southwest.

in fact," replied Mr. Criedir. "About a foot square; the sort of thing you never see nowadays. It was very much worn; it attracted me for that very looked at me. 'You're a dealer in a stamps—rere stamps?' he said. 'I am.' I replied. 'I've something here I'd like to abow you, he said, unlocking the look.' I've something here I'd like to abow you, he said, unlocking the looked at he word in the look.' I've something here I'd like to abow you, he said, unlocking the look.' Step a hit ''s said supports the look of the lo

"Stop a bit." said Spargo. "Where did he take the key from with which he unlocked the box?"

It was one of several which he carried ou a split ring, and he took the bunch out of his left-hand trousers booket." replied Mr. Criedir. "Oh. I he opened his box."

It seemed to me to be full of papers

it seemed to me to be full of papers

motices."

"You'd better go and read up a little elementary entomology. Breton." said Spargo. "I don't know much about it myself, but I've a pretty good idea that when an ant walks into the highways and byways of a colony to which he doesn't belong he doesn't survive his intrusion by many seconds."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

THE GUMPS—The Woman in Black Again



-:-

PETEY—He Gets His Wish -:-OH PETEY DEAR, I -You - I AIHT THINK YOU'RE AWPULL SAID YOU - AINT I GOTTA" GOING TO PALM RIGHT TO CHANGE MY MEAN- I DO! BEACH - THAT'S MOULD ALL - GO AHEAD Go! AND GET SORE PALM BEACH IS TOO ABOUT IT -GO FAR AWAY - I'M GOUNER STICK RIGHT AHEAD: HERE!

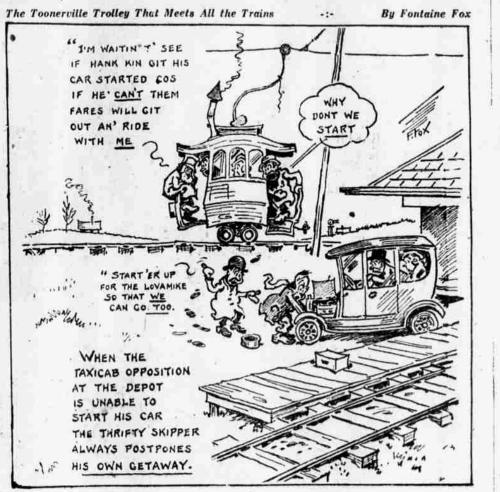
- ID GO BUT, IT TAKES TOO LONG TO GET THERE -TAKES ALL THE FUN OUT OF IT- WHEN I WANNER GO SOMEPLACE - 1 WANNER GET THERE IN A HURRY -- TAKES TOO LONG!

-:-

By C. A. Voight - OH, HOW FORTUNATE DUCLE PETEY- I MET MR. AL TITUDE AND HE'S INVITED US . TO GO WITH HIM IN HIS AEROPLANE TO PALM BEACH

The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says she saw in the paper that there has been a considerable decrease in the visible supply of wheat, but you could hardly expect to see it with the snow so deep in many places.



•:•

SCHOOL DAYS By DWIG -:-.:--:-Gibye, Sellers. This is G.bye, ole boythe last time you'll ever Gimme your sled ? see me agin. In soin to sea an be a sailor, You know the, Frank! She'll never Gimme yis traps. I am. lick me agin will you? agin - Will you? Sarting is such sweet Sorrow

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Presence of Mind

MISS OFLAGE, WHEN A CERTAIN MAN NOW, AS I SAID BEFORE IF 400 COMES, TODAY I WANT YOU TO HIDE CONTRIBUTE \$1000 FOR BEHIND MY DESK AND TAKE DOWN OUR CAMPAIGN FUND WE WHAT HE SAYS, I WANT TO GET WILL GIVE YOU -PROOF OF HIS ATTEMPT TO BRIBE ME .



DOROTHY DARNIT—She'll "Salvage" the Pets SAY SOAPY, DO WHAT! SO LIKE TO EAT SAW MISS SOME PIE OR YOU KNOW IME SOON AFTER DRISCOLL PUT CAKE HUNGRY DINNER! SOME PIES ON THE WINDOW SILL TO COOL OFF

